

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 MCE-00 ACDA-12
OMB-01 /073 W
-----044262 170859Z /13

P R 170632Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7678
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 1053

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, PCAT, UK, TC
SUBJ: BRITISH ARMS SALES TO LOWER GULF

REF: (A) ABU DHABI 1007; (B) LONDON 05810 (NOTAL)

1. FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THIS POST WE HOPE THAT FORTHCOMING
SAUNDERS-WEIR DISCUSSIONS COULD COVER FOLLOWING ISSUES WITH
RESPECT TO UK ARMS SALES POLICY IN UAE:

A. UK CONTINUING WILLINGNESS TO SELL ARMS LIKE SCORPIAN
TANKS MERELY ENCOURAGES LOCAL RULERS AND THEIR MILITARY
COMMANDERS TO ENLARGE THEIR ARMS INVENTORIES BEYOND WHAT
THEY REASONABLY NEED FOR INTERNAL SECURITY OR FOR SELF-
DEFENSE AGAINST ANY CONCEIVABLE EXTERNAL THREAT. SUCH
SALES TO UAE ARE LIKELY NOT ONLY WHET APPETITES OF EMIRATES'
NEIGHBORS ALSO TO SEEK SUCH WEAPONRY BUT EVEN TO "DO ONE
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BETTER" BY SEEKING INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED OR MODERN
HARDWARE WHICH THEIR NEIGHBORS DO NOT YET HAVE.

B. ABILITY OF UAE (AS OF OTHER NEARBY ARMED FORCES) TO
ABSORB SUCH EQUIPMENT IS VERY LIMITED AND ITS MAINTENANCE
AND USE REQUIRES CONTINUING PRESENCE OF LARGE NUMBERS OF
EXPATRIATE MILITARY

BNJBGFEL AND TECHNICIANS. THIS IS
DELAYING DEVELOPMENT OF UAE ARMED FORCES AS RELATIVELY
SMALL BUT WELL-TRAINED NATIONAL FORCE WHICH WE UNDERSTAND
TO BE ONE OF GOALS OF 1975 MILITARY REORGANIZATION PLAN
AND WHICH WE SUPPORT.

C. RECENT SALES AGREEMENTS, LIKE THAT BETWEEN FRENCH AND
ABU DHABI FOR AMX-30 TANKS AND BETWEEN UK AND DUBAI FOR SCORPIANS,
TEND TO EXACERBATE RIVALRIES BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL EMIRATE. IT IS US
POLICY, AND WE HAD ASSUMED IT WAS UK POLICY AS WELL, TO ENCOURAGE
STRONGER, MORE COHESIVE AND VIABLE FEDERATION. LEAVING ASIDE
POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ARMS SALES ACTIVITIES THAT
ENCOURAGE DUBAI'S TENDENCY TO RESIST CLHER COORDINATION OF ITS
POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, ACQUISITION
BY DUBAI AND ABU DHABI OF DIFFERENT MAKES OF ARMOR WILL
COMPLICATE ALREADY DIFFICULT TASK OF STANDARDIZATION OF EQUIPMENT
AND TRAINING AMONG PREVIOUSLY AUTONOMOUS UNITS OF UAE ARMED FORCES.

D. US POLICY HAS SINCE 1971 AND EVEN BEFORE BEEN TO EXERCISE
RESTRAINT IN TYPES AND QUANTITIES OF ARMS IT WILLING TO SELL
IN LOWER GULF. US RESTRICTIONS HAVE BEEN COMPARED INVIDIOUSLY
BY LOWER GULF RULERS AND MILITARY LEADERS, INCLUDING THOSE OF
UAE, WITH GREATER WILLINGNESS OF UK, FRANCE AND OTHER TO
SELL SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY IN THIS AREA. THERE ARE NO PRESENT
US PLANS TO LOOSEN OUR GULF ARMS SALES RESTRICTIONS -- QUOTE THE
CONTRARY. HOWEVER, WE CAN ANTICIPATE INCREASING PRESSURES ON USG
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TO MODIFY THESE RESTRICTIONS BOTH FROM US ARMS MANUFACTURERS AND
FROM PROSPECTIVE LOWER GULF CUSTOMERS AS THEY SEE BRITISH
AND FRENCH DEALERS (INCLUDING GOVERNMENT AGENCIES) TAKING ARMS
OTHERS WITH RELYTIOLY FEW IF ANY RESTRICTIONS.

E. US POLICY RESTRAINTS ON ARMS SALES TO UAE COULD BE
BETTER JUSTIFIED AND SUPPORTED IF WE KNEW THAT OTHERMAJOR
ARMS SUPPLIERS TO AREA, MOST ESPECIALLY UK, WERE ALSO SEEKING
EXERCISE RESTRAINT. FOR THIS REASON WE WOULD WELCOMZRPERIODIC
EXCHANGES OF VIEW ON EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL SECURITY THREATS TO
LOWER GULF STATES AND CONSULATNTS ON HOW OUR RESPECTIVE ARMS
SALES POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES MIGHT BE DESIGNED TO MEET ONLY
REALISTIC AND JUSTIFIED DEFENSE NEEDS OF UAE AND ITS GULF NEIGHBORS.

2. WE RECOGNIZE THAT ONE PROBABLE UK RESPONSE TO OUR EXPRESIONS OF
CONCERN ABOVE WOULD BE TO NOTE (A) THAT SCORPION DEAL IN WORKS FOR SO
ME
TIME AND DOES NOT REPRESENT "NEW" SALES AGREEMENT AND (B) UK AS
WELL AS US RESTRAINT IN ARMS SALES WOULD MERELY LEAVE FIELD OPEN TO
FRENCH WHO HAVE EXHIBITED EVEN FEWER SCRUPLES ABOUT TYPES AND
QUANTITIES OF HARDWARE THEY WILLING TO SELL UAE. OUR PROPOSED
RESPONSE TO (A) IS THAT WHILE WE DO NOT REASONABLY EXPECT UK

TO CANCEL SCORPION SALE TO DUBAI, WE WOULD HOPE THAT LIKELY
POLITICAL/MILITARY CONSEQUENCES FOR ALL FUTURE SALES TO UAE OR
ITS COMPONENT EMIRATES WOULD BE EXAMINED CAREFULLY AND GIVEN EQUAL
IF NOT GREATER WEIGHT THAN EXPORT PROMOTION IN DETERMINING UK
WILLINGNESS TO AUTHORIZE SALE. RE (B) WE OF COURSE RECOGNIZE
DIFFICULTIES IN TRYING TO INFLUENCE FRENCH AND OTHER ARMS
EXPORTERS TO FOLLOW POLICIES OF GREATER RESTRAINT IN LOWER GULF.
US WILL BE WORKING IN SUCH FORA AS MAY UN SPECIAL SESSION ON
DISARMAMENT TO HALT AND REVERSE CONVENTIONAL ARMS RACE. WE
CONSIDER THAT OUR ABILITY TO DISSUADE OTHERS FROM TRANSFERRING CON-
VENTIONAL ARMS IN LOWER GULF WILL BE ENHANCED IF WE CAN POINT
TO RESTRAINT ON PART OF UK AND OURSELVES.

3. DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY LONDON MAY, OR COURSE, HAVE ADDITIONAL
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ARGUMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS THAT WOULD HELP STRENGTHEN CASE WE
FEEL SHOULD BE MADE.
DICKMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMS, MILITARY SALES, GULFS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ABUDH01053
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780163-1225
Format: TEL
From: ABU DHABI
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780451/aaaabrgd.tel
Line Count: 139
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f10628ad-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: 78 ABU DHABI 1007, 78 LONDON 5810
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2952936
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRITISH ARMS SALES TO LOWER GULF
TAGS: MASS, PCAT, UK, TC, XF
To: STATE LONDON
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f10628ad-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014